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National Marine Fisheries Service
c/o Bonneville Power Administration
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These written comments are in opposition to the breaching of lower Snake River dams. Saving the dams is imperative to the region's economy. Breaching would eliminate barge traffic, increase air pollution, highway congestion and traffic deaths. It would hurt agriculture and result in power blackouts and brownouts.

Survival and recovery of endangered and threatened fish are extraordinarily complicated issues. Nonetheless, to make an informed decision, the NMFS must rely on the best evidence available.

For spring/summer chinook, the current transportation option seems very viable. Research now indicates that delayed transportation mortality is insignificant. If subsequent research continues to confirm this finding, advantages of breaching are very limited.

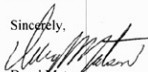
More research is needed for sockeye before the extreme alternative of breaching can be deemed necessary.

For fall chinook, the research indicates that recovery from sharp harvest reductions, both in-river and ocean, is likely. For steelhead, breaching is overkill since reduction in long term harvest rates of only 5-10% furnish the growth rate needed for survival and recovery.

Reduction in harvest rates indeed disproportionately hurts fishing interests. However, a fish harvested is a fish that most certainly does not return to spawn. In contrast, many fish not harvested can and do make their way through the existing hydrosystem to spawn. Taking steps to limit harvests is the fastest, simplest way to jump-start recovery. It would also take the NMFS out of its indefensible practice of allowing huge harvest rates for endangered species.

Adjustments and technological advances in the hydrosystem, such as surface bypass systems, gas abatement, measures to prevent fallback and many other means, should also be used to increase survival through the hydrosystem. Help is already on the way in habitat protection with Washington State's Forests and Fish agreement. Recover can occur without the dramatic and drastic action of dam breaching.

Sincerely,



Daryl Matson